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**ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER PREPARES FOR MONUMENTAL MOVE
OF THE BATTLE OF ATLANTA CYCLORAMA PAINTING**

*– Intense planning, feat of engineering required to transfer 1886 artifact
from Grant Park home of nearly a century to the Atlanta History Center –*

ATLANTA, GA – In a move of historic proportion and requiring a major feat of engineering, *The Battle of Atlanta* cyclorama painting is scheduled to be moved from its Grant Park home to the new custom-built 23,000-square-foot Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building at the Atlanta History Center.

The transfer of one of the city's rarest historic treasures, which debuted in 1886 and has called its current Grant Park facility home since 1921, is being orchestrated by a team of Atlanta History Center staff experts, working with some of the best minds in the highly specialized field of cyclorama conservation. The team's processes have included strength-testing the canvas, documenting the current condition of the paint layers and fiberglass backing, and conducting stabilization conservation efforts needed prior to moving the painting.

The painting, 42 feet tall with a circumference of 359 feet, is estimated to weigh 12,000 pounds. After it was carefully separated along two existing seams, the two 6,000-pound sections are now successfully rolled around two 45-foot-tall custom-built steel spools. Weighing roughly 6,200 pounds each, the spools are standing inside the Grant Park Cyclorama building awaiting their move.

The removal and relocation process will take two days. The spools will be individually lifted out the Grant Park building by a crane through two 7-foot-square holes cut into the concrete roof. After being loaded on the backs of two flatbed trucks with the help of a second crane, they will be trucked to the Atlanta History Center. On day two, the cranes will conduct the delicate operation in reverse, lifting and then carefully lowering the scrolls through a 10-foot-square opening in the roof of the new Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building, sited at the northeast corner of the Atlanta History Center's 33-acre campus at West Paces Ferry Road and Slaton Drive.

Over the next several months, the painting will be unscrolled in its new home for a full restoration, including the re-creation of seven feet of sky across the top of its full circumference. The full Cyclorama experience, complete with the addition of the restored 1856 *Texas* locomotive and enhanced interpretation and exhibitions, is projected to open in fall 2018.

The Battle of Atlanta is one of only 17 surviving cycloramas worldwide dating from 1880 to 1920, when this mix of entertainment and art form first became popular. Cycloramas predated Hollywood talkies and are sometimes described as the 3-D IMAX movies of their time. Of the 11 still exhibited, only three are in North America: *The Panorama of Jerusalem* in Quebec, *The Battle of Gettysburg* in Pennsylvania, and *The Battle of Atlanta*. Created at the American Panorama Company in Milwaukee by German artists, the Atlanta painting is the only surviving cyclorama composed and painted entirely in the United States.

Mayor Kasim Reed announced the relocation of the cyclorama painting in July 2014, on the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta. The Atlanta History Center, a nonprofit cultural institution that celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2016, entered into a 75-year license agreement for the relocation and long-term preservation, restoration and maintenance of the painting, the *Texas* steam engine, and other artifacts.

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Seeded by a lead legacy gift of \$10 million from Atlantans Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker, the Atlanta History Center has raised \$35.2 million for the project, including \$10 million for an endowment that ensures the ongoing care and safe-keeping of *The Battle of Atlanta* painting and the other objects from the Grant Park Cyclorama over the 75-year agreement.

The Battle of Atlanta first opened to the public in Minneapolis in 1886 as a tribute to Northern victory and was moved to Atlanta in 1892. In the nearly 125 years that it has been on display in this city, it has been the subject of periodic reinterpretation. At times it was held up as a proud symbol of the capital of the “New South” rising from the ashes of Sherman’s destruction. It has also been viewed as an anachronism because of its interpretation associated with the philosophy of the “Lost Cause” and white supremacy.

“These shifting viewpoints are precisely what make *The Battle of Atlanta* such a distinctive and important artifact. No other object can so vividly tell the story of how attitudes toward the Civil War have been shaped and reshaped over the past 150 years,” Atlanta History Center President and CEO Sheffield Hale said. “When combined with our extensive Civil War collections, expert staff, and educational programming capacity, *The Battle of Atlanta* will become one of the best tools in the nation to demonstrate the power of the use and misuse of historical memory.”

The History Center will utilize a multitude of resources to interpret the painting, not only in the context of a single battle, but in a national context of a country divided by war. This interpretation will consider the role of slavery in the Civil War, detailed military questions related to the country’s deadliest war, and the impacts of the conflict on American history. Reconstruction, segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, and a number of other social and political watersheds will be explored.

“The Atlanta History Center is a place where differing viewpoints about the past are welcomed, revealed, and discussed – and we are ready to bring the Cyclorama into that conversation,” said Ernest Greer, chair of the History Center’s board of trustees and co-president of Greenberg Traurig. “*The Battle of Atlanta* painting can be treated, appropriately, as an artifact with lessons to teach us, not as a mere tourist attraction.”

Atlanta History Center restoration plans call for the re-creation of a six-foot-wide section, extending the full height of the painting, which was trimmed when it was moved to its current Grant Park facility in 1921. Though the building was designed and constructed to accommodate the full painting, an adjustment had to be made due to either mathematical error or oversight when the painting was discovered to be slightly too large to fit.

Seven feet of sky -- which disappeared from the top of *The Battle of Atlanta* incrementally when it was moved from its premiere city of Minneapolis to Indianapolis and Chattanooga and then three Atlanta locations -- also will be re-created.

The painting will grow from 359 to 371 feet in circumference, and from 42 to 49 feet in height.

The 128 plaster figures that are the focal point of the painting’s diorama, created as part of a Works Progress Administration project in the mid-1930s, also will be restored. Included among the soldiers will be the popular one of a dead Union soldier resembling Clark Gable, added by Mayor William B. Hartsfield after the *Gone With the Wind* star reportedly remarked during a 1939 visit in connection with the film’s world premiere that there was only one thing wrong with the painting: “I’m not in it.”

However, restoration, which should be underway by spring, is considered phase two of the project by Atlanta History Center leaders. Phase one, preparations for the painting’s move, which began in earnest when the Grant Park Cyclorama closed in July 2015, is their demanding focus now.

The move of *The Battle of Atlanta* will complete more than a year and a half of intense planning for the relocation by Atlanta History Center project leaders, vice president of properties Jackson McQuigg and senior military historian Gordon

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Jones. They have worked hand-in-hand with an Atlanta-based team of architects, engineers, and contractors, as well as German, Swiss and American conservators, some of whom have worked on the conservation of panoramic paintings in Europe.

Before the painting could be scrolled, it had to have a strip-lining applied. The new strips of canvas have been adhered temporarily across the painting's top and bottom edges, and grommets were punched roughly every eight inches. A series of small turnbuckles attached inside the tops and bottoms of the towering steel spools are intended to provide tension throughout the relocation process, assuring that the painting does not sag and avoiding abrasion that would cause paint loss.

The Battle of Atlanta's new 23,000-square-foot home will be accessed through the Atlanta History Museum. Guests will proceed down the Centennial Olympic Games Museum (currently closed for construction and preparation for a new exhibition on the '96 Games' legacy) hallway in the Fentener van Vlissingen Wing, bearing left past the Atlanta History Center bookstore/Souper Jenny café, and into a new gallery displaying the *Texas* locomotive. Beyond the glass-fronted *Texas* gallery (making the 1856 steam engine prominently visible to West Paces Ferry Road passersby), guests will enter the Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building.

The building is being constructed to meet appropriate museum-quality standards, maintaining the proper environment for conservation of the historic painting after restoration. For instance, climate controls have been engineered to maintain a consistent temperature of 70 degrees with a humidity level of 50 percent at the bottom and top of the painting.

The larger building allows *The Battle of Atlanta* to be fully extended to assume its natural hyperbolic shape, via natural tension applied at top and bottom. A viewing platform rising 12 feet from the gallery floor will give viewers the sense of being enveloped by the 360-degree experience as they take in its full breadth from the horizon line at 17.5 feet.

This experience was not possible in the Grant Park building, which was too small to present the painting in the intended hyperbolic form. A rotating seat platform added there in a 1980s renovation, a novelty at the time, focused audience attention on different specific points of the painting, obscuring the originally intended grand view in darkness.

Two exhibitions to be presented in the Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building will add thoughtful context about the battle for Atlanta and the Civil War as well as the history of cycloramas.

Restoration of the *Texas*, an important artifact of Atlanta's early railroading days, and famed for its pivotal role in 1862's Great Locomotive Chase, is expected to be completed soon at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C. Plans call for the steam engine to be installed in its new gallery in May.

Once reunited, the *Texas* and *The Battle of Atlanta* painting will greatly enhance the Atlanta History Center's 9,200-square-foot exhibition *Turning Point: The American Civil War* as well as the History Center's Civil War permanent collection holdings, already considered among the nation's deepest.

All of these enhancements strengthen the Cyclorama as an important teaching tool. In its Grant Park location, approximately 12,000 Atlanta Public Schools students were granted free access to the Cyclorama each year. The History Center, which currently serves 50,000 school children annually, is committed to serving our public schools and providing teachers with a unique educational experience for the students. All Atlanta Public Schools 5th-grade students will continue to receive free annual school tours of the Cyclorama, as they did when it was located at Grant Park.

"The greatest value of this project is the historical significance of *The Battle of Atlanta* painting and how it has been viewed and interpreted throughout history," said Senior Military Historian Gordon Jones. "The Cyclorama has much to teach us. It tells a story that extends well beyond the Civil War. In fact, it is the largest single artifact in existence to best tell the story of how the Civil War has been remembered, used, misused, forgotten, and interpreted over time. Literally and figuratively, it's one of the biggest artifacts in the country, and its subject, and home, is Atlanta."